

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HA-05 AID-05 SY-05 A-01 OPR-02
MCT-02 IO-13 PC-01 SCS-06 CA-01 OC-06 CCO-00
OMB-01 ACDA-12 USSS-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
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-----116247 210620Z /10

R 192200Z JUL 78

FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7166
INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAGUA 3273

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PORS, PINS, PINT, NU

SUBJECT: SECOND ATTACK ON LA PRENSA AND RELATED EVENTS

REF: MANAGUA 3228

SUMMARY: THE OFFICES OF LA PRENSA WERE AGAIN SHOT UP AND THERE WAS A SIMILAR ATTACK ON RADIO MI PREFERIDO IN THE EARLY MORNING OF 17 JULY . THIS MARKS THE SECOND ATTACK ON LA PRENSA WITHIN TWENTY-FOUR HOURS AND THE FOURTH THIS YEAR. IT IS UNCLEAR WHO IS PERPETRATING THESE ATTACKS. END SUMMARY.

1. LA PRENSA, 17 JULY, CARRIES STORY ON SECOND ATTACK ON ITS OFFICES WITHIN TWENTY-FOUR HOURS. STORY REPORTS THAT A WARNING TELEPHONE CALL HAD BEEN RECEIVED AT MIDNIGHT AND AT ONE-THIRTY ON MORNING OF 17 JULY, "BULLETS OF HEAVY CALIBER" IMPACTED THE BUILDING. REPORTEDLY NINE SHOTS WERE FIRED; THERE WAS PROPERTY DAMAGE, BUT NO INJURIES. LA PRENSA, AN AFTERNOON, DAILY, NOTED THAT NOVEDES HAD PUBLISHED THAT SAME MORNING --
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FOUR HOURS AFTER THE ATTACK--AN EDITORIAL SUGGESTING THAT LA PRENSA'S EDITORIAL POLICY HAD "PROVOKED" THE EARLIER ATTACK. LA PRENSA SAID THAT THE SECOND ATTACK OCCURRED "WHILE AT THE VOICE OF SOMOCISMO, 'NOVEDADES,' ALMOST AT THE SAME INSTANT A COMMENTARY WAS BEING EDITED SUPPORTING THOSE CRIMINAL ACTS AGAINST LA PRENSA." THE ARTICLE CONTINUED THAT LA PRENSA'S "UNFALTERING POSITION OF CRITICISM OF THE REGIME WILL NOT SUFFER

ALTERNATIONS OF ANY TYPE." (IN FACT, WHAT NOVEDADES SAID WAS THAT IT REGRETTED THE INCIDENT AND HOPED LA PRENSA WOULD RE-THINK ITS POLICY OF PROVOKING VIOLENCE.) ACCORDING TO LA PRENSA OF 18 JULY, THERE WAS A SIMILAR ATTACK ON RADIO MI PREFERIDA ABOUT HALF AN HOUR AFTER THE 17 JULY SHOOTING AT LA PRENSA. MI PREFERIDA HAS AN OPPOSITIONIST IMAGE SIMILAR TO LA PRENSA'S AND IS CURRENTLY CLOSED AS A PENALTY UNDER THE RADIO AND TV CODE (MANAGUA 2845).

2. COMMENT: THESE ATTACKS ON LA PRENSA AND MI PREFERIDA ARE CAUSE FOR CONCERN. THEY TEND TO INCREASE THE RADICALIZATION OF LA PRENSA WHICH IS ALREADY REFLECTED IN ITS REPORTING. THEY HAVEN'T, SO FAR, INTIMIDATED THE MEDIA SUCCESSFULLY. THESE ATTACKS COULD STEM FROM SEVERAL SOURCES. A) THEY MIGHT BE PART OF A GON ATTEMPT TO INTIMIDATE, OR SILENCE, LA PRENSA. B) PARAMILITARY OR RIGHT-WING ELEMENTS, FEELING A MISSION TO PROTECT NICARAGUA FROM COMMUNISTS AND OTHER LEFTISTS, MAY SEE LA PPRENSA AS THE MOST VOCAL ADVOCATE OF A POLITICAL IDEOLOGY ANTITHETICAL TO THEIR PERSONAL INTERESTS AND WHAT THEY PERCEIVE TO BE NICARGUA'S BEST INTERESTS. C) THE ATTACKERS MAY BE MIDDLE-OR LOWER-LEVEL GON ELEMENTS WHO, WITHOUT AUTHORIZATION FROM HIGHER AUTHORITY, MAY BE ATTEMPTING TO ACT IN WHAT THEY PERCEIVE TO BE THE GON'S BEST INTERESTS.

D) FSLN OR OTHER LEFTIST ELEMENTS MAY BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ATTACKS IN A DRIVE TO INCREASE TURMOIL PREPATORY TO THE WORK
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STOPPAGE SCHEDULED FOR 19 JULY. E) ELEMENTS BASICALLY IN TUNE WITH LA PRENSA AND THE RADICAL PRESS MAY BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ATTACKS. THESE ELEMENTS MAY BE SEEKING ONE OF THREE THINGS (OR A COMBINATION OF THEM):

A) TO DRIVE LA PRENSA TOWARD FURTHER RADICALIZATION, B) TO INCREASE PRESSURE ON THE GON BY MAKING LA PRENSA APPEAR TO BE THE TARGET OF GON-SPONSORED HARRASSMENT, OR C) TO INCREASE LA PRENSA'S CREDIBILITY AS BEING IN THE VANGUARD OF REVOLUTIONARY LEADERSHIP (AS EVIDENCED BY THE "RIGHTIST" ATTACKS UPON IT) AND, THEREBY, INCREASE ITS INFLUENCE.

3. COMMENT: IT IS UNCLEAR WHICH OF THE ABOVE ALTERNATIVES IS MOST LIKELY. ALL THAT IS CLEAR IS, A) OPPOSITIONISTS ATTRIBUTE THE ATTACKS TO THE GON; B) THE ATTACKS ALL OCCURRED LATE AT NIGHT WHEN THERE WAS LITTLE LIKELIHOOD OF PERSONAL INJURY (THERE HAS BEEN NONE); C) IN TERMS OF NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL SYMPATHY FOR LA PRENSA AND ANTIPATHY FOR THE GON, AND IN REINFORCING LA PRENSA'S HARD-LINE AGAINST THE GON, THE GON IS THE CLEAR LOSER. THE FACT THAT THE GON HAS NOT CLARIFIED THE ATTACKS AND HAS ONLY RECENTLY INITIATED AN INVESTIGATION MAKES IT APPEAR GUILTY EVEN THOUGH IT IS HARD TO BELIEVE THE GON WOULD NOT RELIZE THE NEGATIVE IMPACT THAT WOULD

REDOUND TO IT FROM SUCH TERRORISM.

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